

When the Moon Shines

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Katrina A. Hodge

Thesis Advisor

Mary Clark-Upchurch

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mary Clark-Upchurch", written over a horizontal line.

Ball State University

Muncie, IN

July, 1992

Expected date of graduation: July 18, 1992

Sp. 1  
1995  
1996  
1997  
1998  
1999  
2000

### Purpose of Thesis

This nonfiction novel was written in response to my personal experience with rape. The novel recreates the experience and the emotions that followed. It opens in a fragmented style with time shifts between the present and the past. These time shifts--which are noted with actual dates--represent the erratic thought processes that occur after a traumatic event. The overall purpose of this thesis is to educate the public about a subject that plagues our society. More importantly, it was written so that other rape victims will never again have to feel alone.

To my beautiful mother who gave me the strength to  
endure by having the strength to endure.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The feelings and emotions that inspired me to write this book stem from the love and concern of so many people. The only place I know where to begin my thank-you's is the beginning.

Without the love and support of my family, I would never have had the strength to put my story into print. To Carrie and Kevin Smith, my sister and brother-in-law. Thank you for your love and friendship and for allowing me to play a part in the life of your beautiful daughter, Amber.

To Chris Willis who stood by me before and after. I love you.

To Andi Jeffers, the best friend anyone could ever wish for. You're a part of me, I'm a part of you.

To Gail Powell, my mentor, my soul-mate.

To Karen Thompson, the added strength and encouragement that I needed to help me find myself again. You are a wonderful counselor, and an incredible person.

To my advisor, Mary Clark-Upchurch. Your kind words and helpful advice made the actual writing so much easier. Thank you for your time and guidance, and for sharing your own talents with me.

To my family. To Jim and Patti Anderson. I love you both. Thank you for giving, and for giving some more. To my cousin, Sherri, who was the first person to read my story. To my grandparents, Chuck and Mary Anderson, who began the tradition of strength and love. To all my aunts, uncles, and cousins.

You know who you are. And to my step-father, Bob Weaver, who kept me on the basketball court when I was sure it was time to quit.

To those special friends who made a difference--Sherry Hitch, Jessi Bex, Karyn Kerns, and Tim Drudge. What a wonderful gift friendship is.

To Victoria Wood and Judy Hamilton who let me know that I was not alone.

You are the ones who have molded and shaped my life. You are the ones who have given me the incentive to go on. A million thanks would never be enough.

I feel nothing, I feel no pain  
I feel no joy nor hurt inside  
I only have myself to blame  
If I see that the world's passed me by

John Mellencamp  
"Last Chance"

April 19, 1991

Friday

Had I been given a choice, I would have chosen to leave. It would have been so simple to stand up and walk out the door, but my feet wouldn't move. I no longer felt like I had control over my body. I no longer felt like I had control over anything in my life. My appointment with my uncle, Dr. Anderson, was at 9:00, and it was my responsibility to be there. Mom had asked me to be there: she had made the appointment. I always did what my mom asked me to do. Here I am, Mom. No turning back.

"Katrina Hodge?"

My eyes wandered to the nurse who had called my name. I stood because I knew that she expected me to follow her to the examining room.

"Your uncle will see you now, hon," she smiled.

Does she know? I thought to myself. She has to. I lowered my eyes and followed her blindly.

"What are you here for today?" the nurse asked once I was seated in my sterile room.

My mind raced. Why was I here? Why did I choose to be here? Then I remembered--I didn't choose. My decisions were dictated to me. I didn't have a choice.

"A consultation."

It was the first thing that entered my mind.

"Okay, hon, Jim will be in shortly."

The door closed behind her and I was alone. I could hear muffled voices and muted phones in the world beyond my examining room, but they seemed millions of miles away. Those sounds belonged to the real world, the world of everyday actions and repetitive procedures. That world was no longer mine. I was alone. I was floating through the void that exists between life and death. I was sustained in limbo, exiled to a bleak land of nothingness.

Minutes passed. I didn't count them. They didn't matter. I would never have noticed them if the thunderous ticking of the clock didn't tell me that they were drifting by. I was startled by my uncle's entrance. He came into the room and seated himself in record time. I suddenly got the feeling that I was wasting the time that belonged to his sick patients.

"Hi, Sweetie," he said softly as he opened my chart. He didn't really look at it, though. He did it out of habit.

"Hello, Uncle Jimmy."

My voice was flat. Even I didn't recognize it.

Jimmy looked at me sympathetically and I wanted to disappear and never come back.

"I talked to your mom yesterday, Trina. I understand you've been through an ordeal. Would you like to talk to me?"

I opened my mouth to speak, but nothing came out. Instead, my eyes welled up and I began to cry. I had no control over



my tears. They were simply another part of the life that was externally controlled.

My uncle handed me a tissue.

"I know it's soon to talk, Trina. You don't have to. I want to check you, though. It's very important that we make sure you're okay physically. It's standard procedure with rape victims."

The spoken word annihilated any rational thought processes that I had thus far retained. I had not yet brought myself to say it, and I had not yet heard anyone else say it. Rape. Rape victim. Rape. RAPE. It was ugly, cold, hard. It was a mean word, destructive. It crashed through my mind and shattered like glass. Then the broken pieces sliced the areas that were already bleeding. Rape. Rape. Rape. I was raped. It hurt to think the word; it hurt to hear it. I wasn't robbed, or beaten, or verbally assaulted. Those words didn't seem to go straight through my heart. I was raped.

I didn't realize that I was crying. I didn't realize that my entire body was shaking. I felt like I was in the middle of a snowstorm. Even my fingernails seemed cold. When I realized that I was losing control of myself, I fought to sustain my sobs. I was afraid to be heard. I was afraid to be seen. I was afraid to exist.

"Nurse, please."

Uncle Jimmy left the room with the assurance that he would return soon. His face remained stoically professional as he

walked away. He looked beyond my tears. He saw me as another victim, another PAP, another series of AIDS tests. He didn't see the little girl that accidentally broke his window with a baseball during a family reunion.

The nurse that brought me to the room re-entered. She looked at me with questions in her eyes as she told me to undress completely and put on a paper robe. I remembered that I told her that I was here for a consultation, and I knew that she had to be wondering why I was now being prepared for a PAP.

Jim returned as soon as I was situated on the table. I was shivering uncontrollably as the cold leather touched my skin. My tears were falling onto my paper robe and I was afraid it would tear.

"Katrina," Jimmy spoke, "I'm going to explain everything that I am doing so you won't be surprised."

I think I nodded in response, but it was hard to tell for sure.

I listened as the doctor began explicitly defining his actions. My face burned with shame and embarrassment as his cold hands explored my body.

"This may pinch just a little, Trina. You're going to have to try to relax."

I didn't feel anything. The doctor's pinch was nothing compared to the excruciating pain that I had formerly experienced. I was at his mercy. He was stronger than me,

more powerful. He had complete control. I was defenseless. At that point, I didn't care. Just let me die, God, I thought. Just let me die and then it will be over.

"It's all over, Trine," Uncle Jimmy promised. "You can get dressed now. Just open the door when you're finished."

The doctor and nurse both left as I gathered my clothes. I put them on quickly and methodically. I was afraid to look at myself and afraid to let anyone else look at me. Once I opened the door as I was instructed, I sat down in the chair and began to cry again.

Uncle Jimmy returned when the clock said that twenty minutes had passed. He shut the door behind him when he entered.

"We'll have to wait about a week to get the results from most of your tests, hon, but I can tell you right now that your pregnancy test was negative."

Pregnancy test? My mind raced. My pregnancy test was negative. I wasn't going to have a baby. I wouldn't have a monster child with an unidentified father. Was I supposed to be happy? Was I supposed to be relieved? Was I supposed to be thankful that I wasn't going to be burdened with a child that I didn't want? Regardless of how I was supposed to feel, I felt an overwhelming sadness. I was an unmarried twenty-one year old college student with my whole life ahead of me. But in one short moment, the entire meaning of my existence was altered. I was met head-on with death and I had survived. I had also found out that I was not to be an unwed twenty-one

year old mother. Who had the right to force all of these changes upon my previously uncomplicated life?

"You'll also need to set up an appointment to have another HIV screening in six months."

I couldn't take it all in, couldn't swallow and digest the information that my uncle was feeding me. HIV? AIDS? That animal didn't kill me, but he still might. His poison could be running through my blood right now, challenging my immune system to break down and give in. He might have given me one final parting gift: a slow, painful death. Wasn't I going to die that way, anyway? I felt like my soul had already begun the agony, even if my body wasn't quite ready to follow.

"I don't want to force any decisions on you, Trina, but I would like to recommend some counseling to you. I know a lady who normally works with adolescents, but who would be willing to talk with you. She's very good and I have a lot of faith in her. I think you would be able to trust her, too. Would you like me to talk to her?"

I didn't know what I wanted. Was I going to have to relate my experience to a total stranger when I couldn't even allow myself to relive it in my own mind? I nodded because I knew that was what Jimmy wanted me to do. I trusted him. He was my doctor, and my uncle.

He promptly picked up the phone and called to the front office.

"Becky," he said addressing one of his employees, "I need

the number of Karen Thompson."

Karen Thompson. She was going to be my counselor. And Becky and everyone else in the front office knew I was going to be counseled.

"Hello, Karen, this is Dr. Jim Anderson."

A pause.

"I have a favor to ask you. I know that you normally deal in family and adolescent counseling, but I have someone here that I'd like to refer to you. She's a twenty-one year old rape victim.

I was no longer simply Katrina Hodge. I was Katrina Hodge, Twenty-One Year Old Rape Victim.

"I would really appreciate your help, Karen. This patient is very special to me. She's my niece."

Jimmy's voice faltered and I looked into his eyes. They were no longer the eyes of Dr. Anderson, they were the eyes of my mother's brother. He was crying. He was crying for me and for the pain that I had experienced. He was crying because he was helpless in a situation beyond his control. He was crying because before him sat the little girl who used to swim in his back yard pool with his daughters. Only now the little girl was a twenty-one year old rape victim.

As quickly as the emotion came, it was gone. Jim turned to me with the look of a professional and asked when I could meet with Karen Thompson.

Time seemed to be an impossibility. I didn't have time

to deal with my emotions. I had papers to finish and finals to take. I couldn't believe I had already taken a day off of school to come to the doctor's office. I was already behind in my studies.

"I can't come home again until finals are over in two weeks."

Although I knew that Jim didn't want me to wait that long before I saw Karen, he made an appointment for me after finals week.

"Katrina, Sweetheart, I hate that this happened to you. It makes me so damn mad that things like this happen to good people. I hope you know that you can come to me for anything you need. I love you, your mom loves you, your Aunt Patti loves you, and nothing will ever change that. I can't make your pain go away and we can't pretend that it didn't happen, but I want to do everything I can to help you through."

I tried to smile at my uncle's kind words, but I couldn't remember how. I knew that it was time for me to leave, but I didn't want to return to the waiting room. I knew that my friend, Missy, was waiting for me and I didn't want to talk to anyone. I didn't want to see the people in the waiting room; I didn't want to chat with the nurses on the way out. I just wanted to run and hide. I wanted to find comfort in the old familiar world that used to feel so safe. But I knew in my heart that I would never feel safe again.

"Thanks, Jimmy," I whispered as I stood to leave.

"Baby, I'd like for you to give Karen a chance. I think that she'll be good for you. Would you come back in to see me after you've talked to her?"

I nodded. What else could I do? Everyone was doing everything in their power to help me, but I still felt helpless. I didn't want to talk about what happened to me, let alone talk about how I talked about what happened to me. But I didn't want to seem ungrateful or uncooperative.

"Hi," my friend, Missy, smiled as I returned to the waiting room. "Are you okay?"

One month ago I was okay. But not now. Not ever again.

March 18, 1991

Monday

What a relief it had been to finish my midterms. I was so uptight about my grades. I had always been such a perfectionist. Sometimes it was really annoying. Be the smartest, be the fastest, be the prettiest, be the best. Once it started, there was really no end. I had an innate need--not a desire, but an actual need--to be number one. It made me really tired at times. I was just so glad to be over one more hurdle in my life.

I was now allowing myself to take a mini-break. I was planning for the big event in my life, my twenty-first birthday. I was always so worried about being underage in a bar that I'd never really gone before. This was my big awakening. It was my "coming out."

Tanning was a necessity before the big day. I had planned to wear my new jean miniskirt no matter what happened with the unpredictable March weather. I was going to knock 'em dead. I didn't know who "they" were, but of course, I was planning on being the center of attention. So, I planned my tanning appointments accordingly.

The only time I could fit tanning into my busy life was at 11:00 at night. It was no problem, though, because it helped me relax before bed. When I arrived at my efficiency apartment at 11:45, I felt refreshed, and tan.



I didn't even notice the man who caught the back door with his foot until he spoke to me.

"Thanks for getting the door. I forgot my key."

"No problem," I said. "It's really a pain to forget your key in these stupid security buildings."

I held the elevator open for him.

"What floor?"

The doors closed.

"Whatever floor you're going to."

I turned to face him, confused by his words. That's when I saw the glare of the knife in the fluorescent lights. That's when I realized that the doors were closed. They were locked, bolted, nailed shut forever. Out of habit, I pushed the button marked "3." I had two floors to plan; two floors to live. The elevator had never moved so slowly. I thought of a million and one ways to escape. It was just like that song, "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover." I could slip out the back, Jack. That was impossible. I had come in the back. Guess I had to make a new plan, Stan. God, I was face-to-face with a shiny new knife and all I could think about was the worst 70's song that was ever written. Sweat was pouring down my back as I prayed that someone would be waiting for the elevator when the doors opened. Who was I kidding? I lived in the closest thing to a convalescent home. Everyone in this building went to bed after Jeopardy. Why did I convince Mom to let me have my own apartment? Was the inconvenience of a roommate worth this?

Selfish, selfish! Look what it got me.

The elevator stopped abruptly.

"Go to your apartment. Don't make a sound. I know where you live, so don't try anything. If you try to run, I'll catch you."

I knew that was true. I never could run very fast. I was always the slowest guard on our high school basketball team. Lose about twenty pounds and you'll be able to keep up, my coach always told me. Too bad I never listened to him.

My hands were shaking so badly that I had trouble getting the key into the lock.

"Hurry up," his voice hissed. It was calm, smooth. He was in control and he knew it.

The lock turned unmercifully. The light that I always left on shone brightly in the darkness of the night. My curtains were open wide enough to let the bright glow of the full moon into the room.

He leaned against the closet nonchalantly.

"I want to watch you undress."

I shivered uncontrollably. My body obeyed when my mind failed. I felt totally detached, like I was floating around on the ceiling watching what was going on below me. Not with the lights on, I thought. What about the cellulite on the back of my legs. I didn't even let my boyfriend, Chris, see that and we'd been dating for three years. At least turn the light off.

But he didn't.

When I dared to look up at him, I saw that his pants were unzipped. His hand worked furiously between his legs as he watched me intensely. I felt the bile rising in my throat as I stood there naked, vulnerable, and tan. The smell of burnt flesh enveloped my senses. The tanning booth did horrible things to young skin. Why had I gone? Why didn't I just go to the library with Chris?

"Lay down, Katrina."

I jumped at the sound of my name. He knew me. He knew my name. He knew that I lived alone. He had been watching me, waiting. All I knew about him was that he didn't really live in this building. And he looked so harmless with his mousy shoulder-length hair and his faded jeans.

I laid on the scratchy carpet as he ordered. Framed faces of my family and friends stared helplessly at me. Their frozen smiles hid their feelings of repulsion at the sight that they were witnessing. Close your eyes, Mom, I silently begged. Please don't watch. Chris's sweet face begged for me to stop. How could you? he asked. Stop him! Tears burned down my cheeks. Close your eyes! I screamed inside my head. Close them! But they didn't. They continued to look, continued to smile.

The sickening smell of sweat filled my nostrils as he laid on top of me. I expected his breath to be rancid, but it wasn't. It was just hot and wet as he breathed down my neck. He didn't even bother to undress. He pulled his jeans down just far

enough. I watched myself floating above the unnatural scene below. I tried to keep myself distanced until it was over. I tried to pretend it wasn't happening. Until it happened.

I stifled a sob as he forced himself into me. I felt my resisting flesh tear and bleed as he continued to do what he'd come to do. I had never experienced such an intense pain-- it was even worse than the time I dislocated my sacroiliac joint. As his breathing grew heavier and his actions grew more intense, the phone rang. He didn't even seem to hear it. My answering machine picked it up on the second ring.

"Hi, this is Katrina. I can't come to the phone right now, but leave me a message and I'll get back to you."

Beep.

"Hi, Sweetheart. It's me."

Chris.

"I have an early meeting tomorrow, so I'm going to bed now. I'll call you when I'm done with classes tomorrow. Love you. Sweet dreams."

Don't hang up, Chris, I begged silently. I told you I'd be home around 11:30. Aren't you worried? Don't you want to come over and check on me?

The machine turned off as I felt a warm fluid spread through my insides. He was finished.

He propped himself up over me and I noticed that the knife was still in his left hand. He lifted his arm and placed the blade against my throat. It was sharp. It was sharper than

any of the knives in our kitchen at home. I knew that if he applied any pressure, it would break the tender skin on my neck.

"You know that I could kill you right now if I wanted to." He smiled sweetly as he ran the knife lightly across my throat --back and forth, back and forth. Just do it, I thought.

"Why are you crying?" he asked. "Was it that bad? Didn't you enjoy it, Katrina? I wanted you to enjoy it." He sat up on my chest and wiped my tears with his empty hand.

"I won't kill you," he promised as he stood and zipped his jeans. He sat back down on the floor and thrust his face next to mine. I could feel his hot breath on my lips and eyelids.

"But remember that I always can."

He kissed me lightly on the forehead, folded his knife, and opened the door.

"I'll lock you in so you'll be safe. Sweet dreams, Katrina."

I listened as his footsteps echoed down the stairs and then I ran to the bathroom and vomited in the toilet. I started a scalding shower and washed away the sticky semen that he left in between my thighs.

After concealing my shivering body with my terry cloth bathrobe, I turned off the lights and sat on the bed in the corner of my efficiency apartment. The moon was so bright in the darkness. It seeped into my room through the nearly-closed curtains. I felt it illuminating my dirtiness. I was in the

spotlight of heaven, and judgment day had come.

I began to hum to myself and I rocked back and forth methodically. The song that played on my lips was one that my mom used to sing to me when I was younger.

K-K-K-Katie, beautiful Katie, you're the only one that I-I-I-I adore. When the moon shines over the mountain, I'll be waiting at the k-k-k-kitchen door.

Mom had tried to nickname me "Katie" when I was younger, but I hated the name with a vengeance. I thought Katrina was so much more regal. Then I heard the "Katie Song" and I wanted to be Katie. But by then, it was too late. I was Katrina to stay. I realized at that moment, though, as I hummed to myself in the moonlight, that I had become Katie. And someone would always be waiting for me at the kitchen door.

March 20, 1991

Wednesday

"Happy Birthday, Dear Katrina! Happy Birthday to you!"

The tiny pub seemed dark, too dark, even though I was surrounded by the security of my family. Uncle Jimmy, Aunt Patti, my cousin Erin, Mom, my stepfather Bob, my sister Carrie, my brother-in-law Kevin--they were all there. They had all come to wish me a happy twenty-one. They sat and laughed and wished me well, oblivious to the sickening event that had taken place in my apartment just two nights before.

I smiled weakly as I blew out my twenty-one candles. The day I had been waiting for had arrived, but now I just wanted it to be over. I knew I had to go through with my plans, though, or my family would be suspicious. And they could never know what happened.

"Are you ready, Trinie?" my cousin, Erin, asked. We were finishing my birthday cake in a local bar, and then I was leaving with my cousin and my sister to hit the downtown Indianapolis scene.

"As ready as I'll ever be," I admitted.

Erin handed me a small shot glass.

"I promise this isn't too strong. You'll like it. You have to have some shots on your twenty-first."

I agreed wholeheartedly. I had taken the next day off work, so I was planning on drinking myself into oblivion tonight.

No one would wonder why I wanted to drink myself into a coma, I had just turned twenty-one.

"One last present before we go," my sister, Carrie, announced. She pulled a giant button out of her purse that read, "Kiss me, it's my birthday."

"You have to wear this tonight. It's standard birthday attire, and you'll get more free drinks."

A chill ran through me as I read the neon words. I felt hot lips on my forehead and shook my head to clear the memory. If I didn't think about it, it couldn't really be real. I put the button on my sweater and tugged at my jean mini-skirt.

"I guess we better go if we're going."

"You don't sound very excited," my mom commented.

"I am," I lied. "I'll get into the mood when we get downtown."

"Carrie," Mom began, "promise me you won't let Katrina drink too much tonight. I read all the time about those goofy college students who drink themselves to death."

"Don't worry, Aunt Sissy," Erin said, "I made Katrina promise she wouldn't throw up."

I smiled. Fat chance.

We drove downtown to meet my friends and I kept hoping that we'd have to go back for some reason. I just wanted to hide under the seat and stay there all night. The lights of the city loomed before us ominously, and I felt myself breaking into a cold sweat.



"Happy Birthday!" my friend, Tim, yelled as we pulled up to the Union Station parking lot. "Your first shot is on me!"

I got out of the car to greet Tim, but stopped short when he tried to hug me. I felt my body tense up and my heart start racing. I wriggled out of his grip, but he didn't notice. I was ashamed of my reaction to my trusted friend. But I couldn't help myself. He was bigger than me, stronger. His muscled arms could have forced me anywhere he wanted me to go.

I was escorted by my friends to the Original Sports Bar. There we met my cousin, Sherri, to begin the birthday celebration.

"Happy Birthday," the bouncer grunted as he handed me my ID. The bar was more crowded than I expected for a Wednesday night.

As soon as I stepped in the door, I was bombarded with different shots. I drank them eagerly as I willed them to take away my memory and my inhibitions. I relaxed a little as they began to dull my senses. The lights grew blurrier, the music grew louder, and I began to feel safe. I gave all my control to my friends and my family. I gave that control willingly so that it couldn't be taken from me.

The dance floor was crowded when Sherri, Tim, and I decided to grace it. Everyone pointed to my button and wished me well. The room spun mercifully and I was lost in the driving beat of the drum machine. I didn't even realize that Carrie was taking me to the bathroom until I was there. I sat on the dirty

floor and vomited violently until there was nothing left.

"Is she okay?" I heard a waitress ask my sister.

"She's fine," Carrie answered. But she didn't know. She didn't know.

May 3, 1991

Friday

"You must be Katrina."

I looked up into the eyes of a tall dark-haired woman.

"I'm Karen Thompson. I'm glad you're here."

I obediently followed where she lead. It was expected.

We turned the corner into a small room with a couple of chairs and a desk. I sat down in the chair that was farthest away from the desk so I would be somewhat isolated. I remembered my manners and tried to offer Karen a weak smile.

"Thank you for seeing me," I whispered. "I know that you don't normally deal with adult situations."

Karen offered me a warm smile. I hugged my purse closer to me as I crossed my legs tightly.

"I want to begin by saying that you have gone through a horrible, horrible ordeal."

Karen's voice was soft and soothing. I liked her, and I was ashamed that she knew so much about me. I would have rather discussed the weather with her over lunch than to be thrust into this kind of initial meeting. She didn't know me before. She didn't know about all of my scholastic honors. She didn't know that I was a three sport high school athlete and a student leader. She didn't know that I once sang the National Anthem at a Pacer's game. She didn't know about my sorority, my friends, my boyfriend, my family. And I wanted

her to. I wanted her to understand that I wasn't a bad person, but I remained silent instead.

"The first thing that I need you to understand is that the rape was not your fault."

I winced at the sound of The Word again and I argued with her in my mind. I let him in the building, I held the elevator for him. I didn't scream, I didn't run. I didn't try to kick him or bite him or hurt him. I just gave into him.

"Do you want to tell me what happened?"

I began to sweat again. I couldn't speak, couldn't breathe. I just stared at my lap. Was there a language to describe what had happened to me? If there were words to describe the pain, and the fear, and the horror, then I didn't know them. So I remained silent. But my eyes begged Karen to forgive me for the uncomfortable quiet that I was responsible for.

"It's okay, Katrina," Karen promised. "I don't want you to talk if you're not ready. I want you to feel comfortable here. There's no pressure."

I felt a lump hardening in my throat and I fought against it. The harder I fought to swallow it, the more painful it became.

"It's okay if you need to cry."

But I knew it wasn't.

"It's good to cry, Katrina."

March 25, 1991

Monday

I didn't cry at all from March 18 to April 18. I didn't tell anyone what happened, either. It was easier to just go on and forget about it. But I didn't go on ... and I didn't forget. I don't remember much about that month that followed The Incident, but I do know that I basically dropped out of life. With flimsy unbelievable excuses, I lied my way out of my sorority, out of work, out of classes, and out of all my extracurricular activities. I even lied my way out of my relationship with Chris.

"Katrina," he pleaded when we were alone one night, "I just don't understand what's happening. You won't talk to me, you won't touch me. Did I do something wrong?"

No, not you, I silently assured him. But in a way, he did do something wrong. He didn't guess what had happened to me. I wanted him to read it in my eyes, wanted him to see it in my withdrawal. Didn't he see the part of me that had died? After three years of laughter, tears, and promises, why couldn't he see beyond my mask? I loved him so much, trusted him even more, but I needed him to see what he failed to notice. All he saw was our relationship falling apart, but he didn't wonder why. He just blamed himself. I hated him for being so self-centered. Why didn't he know? Why didn't he guess?

"Maybe we just need some time apart."

I said it stoically, without emotion. I didn't look at him. My heart was breaking in half, but my soul was screaming with anger. Stop me, it screamed to his deaf ears. Fight for me! Are you just going to let me walk away? Why can't you see? Stop closing your eyes!

I saw the shock on Chris's face. I'd said those words so many times before, but I'd never said them without tears or questions. I thought back to all the frivolous fights we'd had over the past three years of our lives. We'd broken up so many times only to reunite the next day. But this was different. I was too sure of myself, and he felt the finality of my words.

"I don't think that's the answer, but if you need some time away from me, then I'll give it to you." My knight in shining armor, my gallant prince. I knew he meant what he said. He was always giving. Damn it, I wanted to scream. Make me give this time. Make me give you answers. But I knew I wouldn't, knew I couldn't. His voice was shaking. I thought that I should reach out and hold him, but that tender part of me was dead. Instead, I just wanted him to leave. I wanted to retreat back into my private existence where it was safe.

"I don't want you to wait around for me," I spoke in my detached monotone. "Please go out with other people, have fun, go on. Don't think about me."

His hurt voice grew angry.

"Maybe it's that easy for you, but not for me," he cried.

"I love you, Katrina. That doesn't just mean when it's convenient. I can't just turn it on and off."

I couldn't look at him.

"I think it's for the best."

My throat ached from the tension. I felt completely empty inside. I wasn't even sure I was still alive.

"I love you, Katrina."

I didn't even realize he was at the door.

"I love you so much that I'll let you go if that will make you happy. But I won't forget."

The door closed behind him and I curled up into a tight ball on my gold couch. I didn't cry, didn't scream, didn't feel. I just rocked back and forth until I rocked myself into a fitful sleep.

May 9, 1991

Thursday

"Do you still have nightmares?" Karen probed.

I nodded my head.

"Every night. They're always the same, or at least similar. I always see a man, and I know I should be scared of him for some reason. But when he turns to me, I can't see his face. He doesn't have a face. It's just a big mass of nothing. Sometimes when I wake up, I think that maybe I did see his face, and that I forgot it before I woke up. But I always know that it's him. I wake up soaked in my own sweat at least three times a night."

I realized that I was rambling. I wasn't sure if I was making any sense to Karen because I wasn't even sure what I was trying to say.

"Your uncle and I have discussed anti-depressant medication for you," Karen said. "He asked me to determine whether or not I think you need it. He believes that it might help you sleep at night. There are some precautions and some side effects, but Jim wouldn't recommend it to you if he didn't believe in it."

"What is it?" I asked with reluctance. I hated to think that I had to take a pill in order to sleep at night or to function during the day. I was only twenty-one years old, for God's sake.



"Prozac."

I knew about Prozac. My step-dad worked at Eli Lilly. I knew about all the controversy with the Church of Scientology. I'd heard them claim many times that Prozac caused the killer instinct to emerge. It scared me to think about the side effects. What if I started having migraines again? What if I became violent? Would I want to kill myself? Then I realized something. I didn't really care if I died or not right now. I never thought about killing myself, but I never thought about living, either. Maybe I needed medication to help me. Maybe I needed to hide behind something.

"Okay," I agreed.

May 16, 1991

Thursday

"Do you have a boyfriend, Katrina?"

It was my third visit to Karen's. I had already invested over \$200 dollars in counseling and I still didn't feel any better. I faithfully took my little green and white pill at 10:00 every morning, but it hadn't yet begun to work its magic.

"Yes, I do." I offered Karen a semi-smile. I wanted so much for her to like and respect me. I wanted her to see me as a person, not as a helpless victim.

"His name is Chris. We've been dating for three years. We were cast opposite each other in my senior high school musical. It was Fiddler On the Roof. I was Hodel and he was Perchik. We had to kiss on stage and I couldn't stand him then."

I loved telling that story. It always amused my listeners. So, how did you overcome your repugnance? they'd ask with a smile. He must have been pretty insistent, they'd laugh. Yea, he was, I'd reply. I got tired of brushing him off. I also missed his sweet smile when we were apart. I looked forward to hearing him laugh.

"So, you've dated all through college?"

"Well, we break up a lot," I admitted. "But we're usually back together within a day or two." I paused. "Except for this last time."

"Did you break up with Chris after you were raped?"

I hated the way she said that word so matter-of-factly. She never even tried to soften the blow. I mean, it was such a cold, hard, ugly word in itself. It seemed so much nicer to refer to it as What Happened To Me, or The Incident.

"Yes, I broke up with him. I dropped out of life--I guess I dropped him out of my life, too."

"Were you afraid to be with him?"

"I don't think I was really afraid. I just didn't want to be with him. I didn't want to be with anyone. I was so afraid that I'd have to tell someone." I started to sweat.

"When did you finally tell someone?" Karen asked softly.

"One month later."

Karen sighed.

"I can't even imagine what you went through during that month."

I can't even remember it, I thought.

"Why did you decide to tell someone?"

"I don't think it was really a conscious decision," I answered truthfully. "Chris called me one night. I was screening my calls, but I picked the phone up when I heard his voice. I missed him so much. But I still wasn't ready to let him in. He asked how I was doing. We talked for a little while. For some reason, I asked if he wanted to come over. Of course he did--he would do anything for me." I stared out the window as I talked. Drivers raced by without looking back. Life was going on, but mine was standing still in the confines of a

counselor's office.

"As soon as he came over, I put my guard back up. I could tell that he wanted to get closer than I would allow him to. So I talked about what he'd been doing in his spare time. I asked him if he was seeing other people. I don't know why I asked him. I just had to know. He hesitated before he answered me, but I knew. Not really, he said. I asked him what that meant. He told me that Monica had come down to visit last weekend. Monica was a friend of ours that he used to lifeguard with. At least I thought she was a friend of mine. Turned out that she was only a friend of Chris's."

"What happened, Katrina?"

April 17, 1991

Wednesday

"How was Monica?" I asked him nonchalantly.

"She was fine," was his only reply.

"Did something happen between the two of you?" I asked, gritting my teeth. It was none of my business. I wished he'd tell me that it was none of my business. But he didn't. He satisfied my masochistic desire to know.

"Nothing really happened," he admitted guiltily. "I mean, she stayed the night, but nothing happened."

My heart began pounding out of control.

"You slept with her?"

"We slept together, but nothing happened."

"Nothing happened?"

Tell me it's none of my business! my mind screamed. Walk out now! Don't answer me!

"Well, we kissed, but that's all."

They kissed. My boyfriend and my friend had been kissing while I was having nightmares about a nameless faceless monster. He had held her all through the night while I had clutched my teddy bear for dear life. Had he whispered her name in her ear as they kissed? Did he run his fingers through her hair like he used to do with me? Did he think about me? Did he care at all?

"Katrina, why are you looking like that?" Chris asked

desperately. "You told me to go out with other people."

"I didn't tell you to go out with friends of mine!" I screamed. I told you to go out with strangers. I told you to take some of your classmates out to dinner. I didn't tell you to spend the night with our old high school friend.

"I can't believe you spent the night with Monica!" I screamed. "Did you want everyone to laugh at me behind my back? Did she even ask about me?!"

"Yes, she did," Chris defended. "I told her that we had broken up."

Did you tell her that my heart was still broken? I thought. Did you ask her to pour salt in my wounds? It had only been three weeks, for God's sake! Couldn't you at least have allowed yourself a period of mourning?

"I don't know what you want!" Chris yelled desperately. "I didn't want to see other people. I wanted you, Katrina! You were the one who didn't want me! You were the one who asked me to leave! I left because you wanted me to! Now you're standing here crucifying me because I did what you asked me to do! What in the hell do you want from me?"

His voice was hurt and confused. His eyes screamed for answers and I couldn't give them to him. I didn't know what I wanted from him. I didn't know any more than he did.

"We've broken up before, but this time was so different. It was so ... final. I didn't want to go on without you, but I didn't know what else to do. I still don't know what to do.

I would gladly have you back right now, Katrina, but you're sitting there staring at me with hatred in your eyes. I feel guilty for doing what you asked me to do!"

Images of Chris and Monica crowded my mind. Chris and Monica dancing. Chris and Monica laughing. Chris and Monica sneaking off to the bedroom to share a private moment. Chris holding Monica, protecting her from the dangers of the night. Chris's warm breath in Monica's ear as they slept together, side by side. I thought my heart was going to split in half. I didn't realize that I was crying. I couldn't feel my chest heaving with each choking sob.

"What did I do?" Chris screamed. He was desperate with frustration and confusion. "Tell me what I did, Katrina! I never wanted to hurt you. I never wanted to leave you. I'm sorry I hurt you, Baby. I just love you so much and it was so final. I didn't know what to do."

I kept sobbing, hardly hearing his words. He tried to touch me and I pulled myself out of his reach.

"Let me hold you," he begged. "Let me make it right."

"No!" I sobbed as I pulled my knees up to my chest to protect myself. NO!" I kept screaming the words over and over as I shook my head wildly back and forth.

"Good God, Katrina, what's wrong?"

Chris's frantic eyes searched my face for answers.

I choked back the sobs that wracked my chest unmercifully.

I started shaking my head again.

"What?" Chris shouted. "You're scaring me, Katrina. Please talk to me!"

Chris was crying now. He sat helplessly on the end of the couch as I rocked myself furiously into my private world.

"I ..."

"What?" he begged. "Tell me, please."

"Chris ..."

"What, Baby?" he pleaded.

"I was ..."

"Katrina, I can't understand you. Please slow down. Tell me what you want to say."

I looked at him from underneath my sweaty bangs.

"I was ... "

The word wouldn't form on my lips.

"I can't understand you, Katrina."

"Chris, I was ... raped."

Silence replaced the formerly chaotic scene. I heard Chris suck in his breath.

"Oh, Baby ..."

He grabbed me into his arms and I let him. I felt a wave of tension and fear flow from me as he held me close to him. His arms were so tight that I could hardly breathe. But for the first time in a month, I felt safe. So I sobbed hysterically in the security of his grip as together we willed the night into day.



April 18, 1991

Thursday

"Our philanthropy is scheduled for next weekend, so don't make any plans." Our sorority president rambled on about all of our required events. The list was endless and I was very uninterested, so I allowed myself to drift away. I felt strange being back in that meeting room. The rows of chairs were filled with people, yet somehow they still seemed empty. I hadn't been to chapter for three weeks. I could feel the angry eyes burning into the back of my head. Why did you leave? they screamed. We don't want you back now.

Missy handed me a note.

"This is such B.S."

I wasn't sure she meant it. She probably said it for my benefit. She was so into our sorority. It was her whole life. She knew how I felt, though.

The meeting finally ended and my heart began to race as I thought about what was to come.

"Well, what do you think, Little Sis?" Missy's voice echoed. "Are you going to give us another try?"

I couldn't make that kind of commitment right now. I just needed a friend. That's what sorority sisters are for.

"I don't know, Miss. That's not really why I came tonight. I need to talk to you, and to Victoria. Can you come over to my apartment for a little while?"

"Sure," Missy agreed. She was always right there when I needed her. "Is everything okay?"

I didn't answer. I was trying to catch Vic on her way out.

"Victoria, can I talk to you for a minute?"

"Glad to see you back," Victoria smiled. I hoped she meant it. I didn't know Victoria well, but I needed her. She was the one I had to talk to, the one who would understand.

"What do you need?"

"Actually, I was wondering if you could come over to my apartment for a little while."

"Well, I have a test tomorrow, so I can't stay long."

"That's okay," I agreed.

"I drove tonight, so I'll just meet you over there."

Missy and Victoria arrived at my apartment at the same time. They must have met downstairs. I was relieved that neither one of them had to ride the elevator alone.

"What's up, Sweetie?" Vic asked as she helped herself to a glass of Diet Coke. I was realizing that sorority sisters needed no invitation. It was just assumed that we shared everything.

"Are you thinking about coming back?" Missy asked again. "You know, it would be no problem. Your official de-pledging paperwork hasn't been sent to nationals yet."

I didn't answer. I felt my eyes well up as I thought about what I had to say.

"Katrina, what's wrong?" Vic asked as she moved to sit next to me. "Are your parents okay?"

I nodded.

"Are you okay?"

No response. I felt the tears sliding down my cheeks.

"What happened?" Vic probed. I was grateful that she was doing all of my talking for me.

"Don't be afraid to tell us," Missy assured me. "That's what sisters are for."

"I..."

"It's okay."

"I..."

I didn't have to say anything more. Victoria knew. I had wanted Chris to guess by the loss that was evident in my eyes, but I couldn't expect him to know. Only Victoria knew. I could only expect that kind of insight from someone else who had been through what I'd been through. That's why I wanted to talk to her. She knew too well what had happened to me.

"Oh, God, what did he do to you?"

I began sobbing. Victoria held me in her arms until I could breathe normally again. When I looked up at her, I noticed that she was crying, too. I had brought all the memories back. With guarded reluctance, I told my friends about That Night.

"You haven't told anyone else?" Vic asked unbelievably.

"Just Chris."

"And he didn't tell anyone?"

"I asked him not to."

"Katrina, you can't deal with this alone. Believe me, I know. You have to tell your parents. No matter how scary it sounds, they have to know."

"I can't!" I sobbed.

"I know it seems like you can't, Katrina, but you can. You'll be so glad once you do." Victoria paused. "I never would have made it through without my parents."

Silence.

"If you want me to talk to them, I will."

"No!" I insisted. That would be the worst thing in the world. My mom would die of a broken heart if she heard from someone else. She would die of anger and frustration if she heard at all.

"You have to do it, Katrina."

"How did you do it?" I pleaded.

"Do you know what happened to me?" Victoria questioned.

I shook my head. I didn't know any of the details. I only knew that Victoria had been attacked, too. Sweet, beautiful Victoria was also a rape victim.

"I was walking to the Architecture Building one night to visit my boyfriend in studio. I was a freshman. I was still young, naive, and stupid. Two black guys jumped me from behind and dragged me in between two buildings. I don't even know where they came from. They were huge, though. And strong. As soon as they got me where they wanted me, they beat the shit

out of me."

Don't go on, I silently begged. The image that formed in my mind was too painful to bear. I couldn't stop seeing Victoria's beautiful face swollen and bloody. Were her cerulean eyes black and blue? Was her coal-black hair matted and sweaty? Poor, poor Victoria. She was only a freshman--just a baby.

"When they were done hitting me, they took turns raping me." Her voice was dull and lifeless. She had told her story a million times. "Then they left me in between those buildings nearly unconscious."

She didn't cry. She just stared blankly ahead.

"I pressed charges, but they got off for good behavior. I still see them on campus all the time."

Missy sighed as she shook her head.

They were free. Those rapists were walking around freely, waiting to find their next innocent victim.

"My mom put me into counseling, and I would have gone crazy without it. That's why you need to go, Kat. Please go."

Victoria's voice shook as she began to cry again. The three of us sat and cried together until I thought I would die from exhaustion. Missy offered to stay with me. She insisted on staying with me. Victoria went home around 1:00 A.M. She left armed with her 70,000 volt stun gun.

The phone shattered the silence of the night as I jumped out of a fitful sleep. My alarm clock read 4:30 A.M.

"Hello," I mumbled.

"Katrina, it's Mom."

I sucked in my breath.

"I just got a call from Victoria. Baby, what's going on?"

Her voice was shaking.

"Katrina, she told me that you've been raped."

May 23, 1991

Thursday

"It was the worst moment by far."

"How did you react?" Karen asked.

"I don't really think I did. Mom was hysterical. She wasn't really crying, but her voice was kind of high-pitched and strained. I mean, it was almost daylight and she didn't even sound tired. Just frantic."

"What do you mean by frantic?"

I really liked Karen, but sometimes her typical psychologist questions bothered me. I knew she was trying to get me to open up, but that was precisely the problem. Why did I need her if I already knew what she was going to say and do?

"She wanted to come up right then. I mean, you have to really know my mom to understand how ludicrous that notion was. She was terrified to be in a car. My parents had visited me at school exactly two times in the three years that I had been there. Mom was just terrified to be on a road any bigger than two lanes. I knew she was out of her head when she said that she was going to drive up."

It was funny in a way, but more than that, it was so sad. My heart ached to think about my mom sleeping at home in the darkness when the phone rings to tell her that her daughter has been raped. My poor, sweet mother. I know that I would want to kill anyone who hurt her. Did a mother feel the same

way about her child?

"Did you talk to her about the rape?"

I paused.

"No, not really. We talked about when they were coming up. We talked about having Chris stay with me every night. But we never talked about what happened. It was better that way. My mom and I never talked about consenting sex. I wouldn't have known what to say. She did want me to go to the police, though."

"What did you think about that?"

"I thought it was a bad idea. I mean, it had been a month and I hadn't made any kind of report. And even if they did believe that someone had attacked me, I still would have had another problem."

"What's that?"

I looked down at my knotted fists. I looked around the room. Then I met Karen's eyes.

"I can't remember him."

My voice wavered because I knew she wouldn't believe me. Who in the world wouldn't be able to remember the man who raped them?

"Katrina," Karen said softly, "that's one of life's most rewarding defense mechanisms. You don't remember him because your mind won't allow you to think about the fear and terror that's associated with his face. It's okay not to remember him. In many ways, it's good not to remember him."



I thought about the nameless faceless stranger who had taken everything from me. I was afraid to stay by myself in broad daylight. I refused to go out by myself at night. I carried mace in my left hand when I went to the grocery store. I saw him every night in my dreams, but it wasn't really him. It was just some image that my brain had invented to keep the memory fresh. Would I want to know what he looked like? Would I want to press charges? Would I want to sit in front of a jury and tell them about how he masturbated in front of me? What were you doing out so late, they'd ask. Why didn't you scream or run? I didn't have answers to questions that should never be asked. But I knew they would be asked. Would I be able to point to the devil in the defendant's chair and say, "That's the man who raped me"? Or would I rather take my own knife and stab him slowly until all the evil life drained out of him?

"What are you thinking about?" Karen probed when the silence became overwhelming.

"Nothing," I lied. I couldn't believe that I was thinking about killing someone. It scared me too much to admit it.

"You don't have to be afraid here, Katrina."

But she was wrong. I had to be afraid everywhere.

"Tell me what you thought about Victoria calling your parents."

I didn't know how to respond. I hated her for taking away my right to make my own decisions, but I was so grateful to

her as well. She had released me from my incommunicable prison and she had brought me back into the safe arms of my family. She must have known better than I what needed to be done. How could I be angry at her for giving me a chance to live again?

April 25, 1991

Thursday

"Missy, I don't want to go," I complained. "I have so much studying to do. Is there any way I can get out of it?"

"Kat, you need to go to this one function so everyone knows that you're serious about coming back. If you don't want to tell everyone why you were gone, then you need to let them know that you intend to stay this time. It won't be long. We can make an appearance and if it drags on, we'll leave early."

"Promise?"

"Promise. I'll pick you up at 6:45."

I hated these Panhel speakers more than anything. I got so tired of hearing about social rules and hazing tragedies. I didn't even know what this speaker was talking about. I planned on taking my British Lit so I could study in the auditorium.

"I'd like to begin tonight by introducing myself." The speaker started right at 7:00. I also opened my anthology to Milton's Paradise Lost right at 7:00.

"Many of you have probably noticed that there are many more sorority members than fraternity members in attendance tonight. When I was asked to speak tonight, the Panhellenic president told me that attendance was going to be open to everyone, but that it was going to be optional. How many of you were required by your individual chapters to be here

tonight?"

All of the female hands were raised.

"Even though I'm so grateful to see you women here, I'm very distressed by the lack of male attendance. What I'm going to talk about tonight concerns women, but my lecture would be so much more beneficial if it was heard by men. I want to tell you tonight about the frighteningly high rate of violent rape on the college campus."

I felt myself break out into a sweat. Missy grabbed my hand.

"Let's leave," she whispered. "You don't need to hear this."

I shook my head. I couldn't allow myself to get up and walk out of that room. Everyone would know then. Everyone would guess. And I also knew that my legs wouldn't have the strength to carry me all the way to the door.

"One in every four college women will be raped while she is a student. One in every ten college men will rape."

I began to shiver. All of a sudden, I was turning into a statistic. I began to count every fourth sorority sister sitting in my row. His statistics meant that Julie had been raped, and Lisa, and Kathy, and Jennifer. I wanted to throw up.

"Are you okay?"

Victoria leaned over and whispered in my ear. I looked down at my hands. My knuckles were white because I had clenched

them together so tightly. My fingernails had dug grooves into my skin. Victoria took one of my hands in her own.

"We can go now if you want to."

But I stayed where I was. I listened to all of that man's frightening information. I listened until my head throbbed with information that I didn't want. Then he opened the floor for questions and comments.

A skinny blonde girl in Guess jeans raised her hand.

"You said that it's a victim's decision whether or not to report a rape, but I disagree. I think that every rape victim has the responsibility to go to the police after a rape. If they don't report the crime, then that rapist goes free. If I was raped and I found out later that the same man had raped before and it had never been reported, then I would blame the first victim for my rape. It's not ethically right to allow those men to walk the streets."

Half of the audience thundered their applause. I began to feel a dizziness sweeping over me as my sorority sisters clapped their hands loudly in support of the uninformed Pollyanna across the aisle. What happened to sisterhood? I wanted to scream. How can we fight this thing if we're condemning each other for crimes that we didn't commit? I wanted to cry almost as much as I wanted to vomit. Instead, I jumped from my seat and raced from the auditorium with a million eyes behind me.

May 27, 1991

Monday

"I can't wait to see you!" Gail shrieked as we were hanging up the phone. "I'm so glad you're out of school now so we can start shopping again!"

I laughed even though I didn't really feel like it. It had been so long since I'd talked to my friend and former music teacher. I missed her so much, but I hadn't been ready to tell her that my life had been turned upside down. I needed her, though. I needed her more than I ever thought I would. She was my friend, but she was also my guide. We shopped together, but she also was my confidant through some of my most difficult high school times. Now I was in a position where I didn't want to talk to my mom or my sister. It was just too strange to bring up the pain and the memories with them when it was better to leave them hidden from view.

"Can we meet at Burger King for a Coke when you get done with school today?" I begged without making it obvious.

"I'll be there at 3:00," Gail promised. "Love you, miss you."

"Love you, too. See you at 3:00."

As soon as I hung up, I wanted to call back and cancel. I didn't know how I was going to go through with it, but deep in my heart, I knew that I had to.

Three o'clock rolled around too quickly. I sat in Burger

King with my Diet Coke in front of me when Gail bounded into the restaurant.

She yelled at me from the door. "Let me get some fries, and I'll be right there. I might just pass out on the table if I don't eat something soon!"

God, she was incredible. She was so beautiful, so full of life. She radiated warmth and energy. Her smile brightened the whole room, yet it couldn't brighten the darkness in my soul. Should I contaminate her with my filthiness? I thought. Is it selfish of me to bring her into my own private nightmares?

"Katrina, you look awful."

Gail had already seated herself across from me.

"Did you pull too many all-nighters during finals?"

"Hello to you, too," I joked without effect.

"Don't try to tell me that everything's okay when I know by your eyes that it's not. You should know by now that I know you too well to ignore that dullness."

She certainly cut right to the chase.

"You're right," I admitted. "Something is wrong."

"Is it your mom?" Gail asked in reference to my mom's painful bouts with polyneuropathy.

"No, not really. I mean, she's not any better, but that's not what I need to talk to you about."

"Katrina, I've seen that look in your eyes before. You look totally defeated and void of life. Is it the eating thing again?"

I thought about Gail's reference to my senior-year battle with bulimia. She had been my stabilizer through those endless days. She was the one who held my hand when I was weak from vomiting. She was the one who made me stay with her as often as I could so she could make sure I wasn't taking my usual fifty laxatives a day. Gail was my savior during that endless year. Now she stared at me with troubled eyes as she recalled the dark circles that were a constant reminder of my self-inflicted disease. But I was thinking about a much more painful reminder of a much more disturbing night. All the grief that I felt in that entire year couldn't begin to compare with the agony that I had experienced in the twenty longest minutes of my life.

I shook my head.

"What is it then, Katrina?"

That damned lump filled my throat and I began to shake again. I couldn't bring myself to say it; couldn't bring myself to form that horrible word on my lips. Gail continued to play the guessing game while I fought with myself to give her the answer.

"I was raped."

It came out quickly and unexpectedly. Once I said it, I stopped shaking. I didn't cry, didn't react at all. I just watched as all the color drained out of my beautiful friend's face.

"Oh my God, Katrina." I saw tears forming in her eyes.

"What can I do?"



"I just need you to be my friend again. Be my savior,  
Gail. I just need you."

My voice was small and unrecognizable. An elderly man  
smiled at us as he picked up his tray and threw away his soggy  
french fries.

May 29, 1991

Wednesday

"You don't have to work this summer if you don't want to," Mom assured me. "I'm not sure I like the idea of you going out to your car at night by yourself."

I didn't like that idea, either, but I knew Mom was being unreasonable again.

"Mom," my sister broke in, "I've worked there for five months and I've never had to go out to my car alone. Someone always walks me out."

But you're not a rape victim, I could hear my mom thinking. You're not the vulnerable one. You're wrong, Mom, I responded silently. We're all the victims. We'll always be vulnerable.

"Mom, Carrie's right. It's as safe as any other job. I mean, at least Carrie will be with me some of the time. We can drive together on the nights that we're both working. I can't stay hidden for the rest of my life."

My words were brave, but they weren't sincere. I wanted to hide for the rest of my life, but reality forced me to stay in the real world. How was I going to pay my credit card bills if I didn't have a job?

"It's just so soon," Mom sighed.

I felt my whole body tighten. I hated talking about that night with my mom. It was so uncomfortable, so unnatural. Mothers and daughters were supposed to discuss boyfriends and